

June 21, 2023

Dear Members of the Tom Lantos Human Rights Commission,

Azerbaijani Students Association members are writing to express our vital concern and opposition to the upcoming Tom Lantos Human Rights Commission event, "Safeguarding the People of Nagorno-Karabakh." While we acknowledge the importance of discussing human rights issues, addressing the inaccuracies and biased narrative present in the event's description and content is essential.

Firstly, the use of the term "Nagorno-Karabakh" itself needs clarification. It is crucial to understand that "Nagorno" is a Russian word added to the region's name during the Soviet era, while "Karabakh" is a Turkic word meaning "black garden." These historical facts highlight that the original native people of Karabakh are Azerbaijanis, whose rights to this land have been recognized by UN Security Council resolutions 822, 853, 874, and 884, which were unanimously adopted in 1993. The United States itself recognizes Azerbaijan's indisputable right to the war-torn Karabakh region under international law.

Furthermore, it is essential to acknowledge that Armenia illegally occupied the region of Nagorno-Karabakh, which belongs to Azerbaijan, for a period of thirty years. This occupation defied the international community and involved illegal settler colonialism, where Armenian settlers resided in the ruins of Azerbaijani cities and towns. Azerbaijan's recent actions to restore its territorial integrity were in accordance with four UN Security Council resolutions, aiming to halt the smuggling of weapons, landmines, and other items that jeopardize peace as well as address ecological terrorism perpetrated by Armenia.

Contrary to the portrayal in the event's description, Azerbaijan has consistently expressed its willingness to coexist peacefully with Armenians. Azerbaijan has offered equal rights to ethnic Armenians living in Karabakh as Azerbaijani citizens. It is noteworthy that Azerbaijan, while recovering from the suffering caused by Armenia, is committed to rebuilding not only the mosques but also the churches in the region. Azerbaijan actively promotes a policy of multiculturalism, respecting and supporting followers of all faiths and religions. Azerbaijani society celebrates diverse religious holidays together, fostering unity and respect among different communities.

In light of the facts above, it is disheartening to witness the Tom Lantos Human Rights Commission supporting the baseless accusations of the aggressor in this conflict. Events such as the one you are organizing only serve to encourage Armenian obstinacy regarding signing a peace treaty and enable Iran to exploit Armenia as a means to bypass Western-imposed sanctions. By holding these hearings, the Commission risks endorsing the distortion of justice and truth, which cannot be justified under any circumstances.

As an association, we urge the Tom Lantos Human Rights Commission to reconsider the approach taken with this event and ensure a fair and balanced discussion that considers the rights and perspectives of all parties involved. It is crucial to strive for an unbiased assessment of the situation to contribute to lasting peace and stability in the region.

Thank you for your attention to this matter. Could you please include this letter in the event's official record? We remain hopeful that the Tom Lantos Human Rights Commission will uphold its commitment to fairness, objectivity, and the protection of human rights.

Sincerely,

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